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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AS A DIMENSION IN AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS

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Yash Tandon

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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Introduction : A world caution

As prevalent paradigms of development fail to solve the increasingly desperate economic and social situation in Africa, policy-makers have begun to look for alternative workable models, and of late have been waxing lyrical about "popular participation" as a way of restoring their declining credibility. Even the "Development bureaucracies" of the Bretton Woods institutions have begun to see the merit of the "participatory" approach. For example, in an article in the IMF journal, Finance and Development, titled "Can local participation help development?" Michael M. Cernea, learning from Mexico's PIDER programme, wrote:

> Local participation was conceived as a way of improving the quality and effectiveness of these investments. In many cases, decision making without the involvement of the beneficiaries misdirected funds. while the participatory approach succeeded in improving their allocation.1/

Cernea goes on then to outline what he calls "the new participatory planning methodology" involving a sequence of three phases . (a) field community assessment, (b) preliminary programmes, and (c) final programmes. In each phase, the roles of technical agencies and local groups are carefully identified; specific procedures, sociological and the technical aspects of investment planning are taken into account; and popular participation ensured through arrangements under which local communities contribute to the total cost – in cash, in labour, or in locally available materials. Already, the discerning eye will see a problem in this "methodology", but to this we shall come later.

If the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is not to get bogged down in the naive populism inherent in the word "popular participation", then it should ask some searching questions on what "participation" means in the concrete conditions of Africa, and what "development" has meant in the last decade or so. The ECA, let it be dropped, is a late-comer onto the "participation bandwagon", but as all late-comers it can at least take advantage of hindsight and check itself before stepping on to a ground already (mis)appropriated by the likes of the World Bank, the IMF and the EEC.

We say this not to dismiss "popular participation" as a perspective towards "development", but as a warning against going about it in a simplistic manner. If participation is to be thought of simply as a new "technique", "methodology" or a new "gimmick" that will pull Africa out of its present bleak situation. then the ECA is best advised to stick to a more straightforward and honest language of justifying its role (itself an issue for appraisal) rather than adorn it with a populist smokescreen behind which the exploitation and oppression of the masses of Africa continue unabated in the next millennium. The ECA, if it is not careful, could be holding the African milk cow with a populist participation banner in the air whilst imperialist hands milk her. That would be a crime against Africa.

So let us get a few concepts cleared up first.

Conflicting conceptions of Development

Conflicting conceptions of development abound, of which we identify four main ones.

(a) Development as "Growth"
(b) Development as "Welfare"
(c) Development as "Empowerment"

(d) Development as "development of the inner spirit"

These are not (excepting the last one) just abstract or historic categories of "pure" thought based on some universal principle of "development". The first is the dominant bourgeois concept of development born with the rise of capitalism. Development is seen in terms of increasing "gross domestic product" or "per capita income", and is associated with increasing capitalization of production moving to higher and more sophisticated levels of technological application, industrialization and declining share of agriculture in total output, consumerism, declining population, increasing sophistication in the use of financial instruments such as the substitution of equity with debt capital through "leveraging", etc. There is assumed to be a linear progress from lower to higher levels of "development", and the benefits of this process is supposed to "trickle down" from the richer classes to the poorer ones.

Development seen in terms of "growth" is not merely a "conceptual" category or simply an "idea". Nor has it anything to do with "idealism" in the sense of promoting certain universal "values" towards which humanity should "ideally" aspire. Also, despite the "trickle down" supposition, it has, in theory and in practice, very little to do with human welfare. However, it has a strong material basis to it. The concept of development as "growth" is rooted in capitalist production, and at a material level it follows certain recognizable laws of motion driven by, to use a popular term, "profit" – a mystifying euphemism for value extracted for unpaid labour.

Development in this sense is promoted as an ideology principally by the capitalist ruling classes of the world (both in the developed and the so-called "underdeveloped" countries). The Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, the IMF, and GATT) set up at the end of the Second World War and periodically modified in the light of changing circumstances are there to "monitor" the development of the world economy along certain assumed lines of "linear growth".

Unfortunately, capitalist growth is neither linear nor even. It is dialectical and uneven. Out of its unevenness arises social inequities. Some people have too much (wealth, power, etc.) whilst others have little or none; some are employed whilst others are semi- or un-employed. There is inherent in capitalism a tendency towards concentration of wealth and power and not a "trickle down". As with society so with nature. Capitalism exploits nature leading to its waste, spoilation and degradation. Furthermore, out of its dialectical character arises a struggle between opposite forces manifested at the social level, among others, by on the one hand those who labour and on the other by those who own capital, and at the material level by on the one hand nature and on the other hand capital.

The capitalist State intervenes to modify economic policy and/or social programme in order to even out the unevenness of growth characteristic of capitalism, and to mediate between classes in contradiction. This is what gives rise to our second concept – that of development as "welfare". Development in this sense is measured in terms of the quality of life using indices such as "equitable" distribution of income, life expectancy, nutrition, infant mortality, literacy, education, access to employment and such amenities as housing, electricity, telephones and toilets.

This second concept of development also has a strong material basis. Economically it too is rooted in the capitalist system of production and exploitation. Historically this welfarist model of development arose out of the struggles of the working classes against the inequities of capital whereupon capital incorporated or co-opted elements of its anti-thesis to forestall its own denouement in a reformist modification of the capitalist system which preserved it in its essentials whilst removing some of its excesses. This is the so-called "social democratic" solution to

the inequities of "pure" capitalism. In this sense, the so-called "mixed economy" is not, as some say, "part socialist and part capitalist". It is simply capitalist with State intervention to remove some of its excesses, and it began not with "third world" economies but with Bismark in Germany during the 1870s.

The third concept of development - development as "empowerment" - is of more recent vintage. (A few years ago, some people used to call it development as "liberation", but "empowerment" is the "in-thing" these days). It stands in opposition to the first two concepts, for it seeks to transfer economic and political power from those who have it now to those who are powerless, or, to use a term of popular usage, the "grassroots". But to a more elaborate explication of this concept we shall come later, since it is closely linked to the principal subject for discussion in this paper, namely "popular participation".

The last concept of development - development of the "inner spirit" - need not detain us for long here except to say that we do have some sympathy with this perspective. This is not to detract us from a materialist conception of history, but to acknowledge that the dialectic of mind and matter cannot be reduced to one-sided philosophical materialism. Also we mention this concept of development in deference to those of our spiritual colleagues whose numbers are large, and growing, and who seek to define development in terms of inner spirituality in opposition to the crass materialism of our consumerist epoch.

The next question is: where do we locate the present debate in Africa within the above definitional diversity? What developmentalist "model" are those making policy in Africa talking about these days?

Dominant developmentalist debate in Africa

We would say that the present "official" debate (i.e. debate among policy-makers) is located mainly between the first and the second - i.e. growth and welfarist - concepts of development. In most African countries, governments in the 1970s and 80s used to describe their "development plans" in terms of either "growth" or "growth with equity" or similar such categories of confusion. The debate now, as we wind up the decade of the 80s, is fast leaving the "equity" stage and narrowing down to "saving those who can be saved" from a clearly visible impending disaster. To understand this, a little historical digression is necessary.

In the 1960s (and part 1970s) the "growth" concept as defined above was the dominant concept in African official discourse, and economic planning was done in most African countries usually with "directives" (called "recommendations") from World Bank officials, (often with semi-literate ideological rational written by Harvard-trained "experts"). The 60s were supposed to be the "development decade" for Africa, and development was conceptualized in the sense of "growth" as outlined above - increasing GDPs, "trickle down" and the rest of the illusions of the "growth" model. Predictably however, whilst some "growth" was recorded, it did not measure up to expectations and, above all, the social cost in terms of marginalization of the weaker sections of the society became staggeringly visible, with its antecedent manifestations of unemployment, collapse of rural communities, and urban squalor. It would be only a slight caricaturisation to say that the official orthodoxy (propounded by the World Bank) blamed it all on "overpopulation" and the alleged propensity of Africans to produce too many babies. So then came the shift to "growth with equity" in the 1970s and 80s. The primary thrust of all "development" effort was still "growth" with all the by-now discredited categories of development (increasing GDP, increasing industrialization, etc.) still very much intact, with, however, a few differences in detail - such as an emphasis on "export orientation" instead of "import

substitution", on better agricultural prices, on liberalization of imports, etc. The major difference, however, was in the acknowledgment that the social cost of the "growth" model must now be faced squarely in the planning process rather than be handled in an ad hoc manner, as in the previous decade. And so social policy came to acquire as respectable a position as economic policy.

It still didn't work. If anything, the situation in Africa worsened. Even by its own indices of "growth" Africa was poorer at the end of the 1980s decade than at the beginning. For example, in 1978 GDP per capita in Africa was US$ 854; by 1988 it had dropped to US$ 565. Whereas in 1978 investment was 25.2 per cent of GDP, by 1988 it had fallen to 15.8 per cent. And, most strikingly, Africa's debt rose from US$ 48.3 billion in 1978 to a staggering US$ 230 billion in 1988, with debt-servicing as a proportion of export earnings increasing almost threefold.2/

Of course, the social manifestation of increased impoverishment of the African continent is, the human terms, unbelievably painful to watch. One does not have to visit refugee camps -- and there are so many of them in Africa these days -- to witness destitution and inhuman conditions of "existence". I have attended "rural development" meetings in Africa where women could not attend because they only had torn clothes in which to present themselves, and eight out of ten bare-feet children milling around would have distended stomachs. However, all this is presented in less painful de-emotionalized statistical categories in the tricolour-shaded graphs of World Bank's Annual Reports. But it would not be too wrong to say that anywhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the rural population in Africa I know (eastern and southern Africa) survive through relief hand-outs by governments of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or their locally funded "partners".

Thus, towards the close of the 80s, and as we approach the 1990s, nobody in Africa is talking about "equity" any more. It is obviously an unattainable goal. There is now simply a question of "bare survival" of the African population. The World Bank now incessantly talks about "structural adjustment" purely at the economic level. It is back to the "growth" model. But instead of "equity" for all the talk now is about saving the "vulnerables" - those "damaged" by the structural adjustment programme of the Bretton Woods institutions.

The human cost of the so-called "structural adjustment" has been amply documented. A 1987 Study by UNICEF came to the following conclusion:

> The analysis above has shown that among IMF-assisted countries improvements in current account balance were recorded in 56 per cent of countries in the 1980s, but in almost 60 per cent of these countries growth deteriorated or did not improve in the first programme year, and real investment levels also declined or stagnated between 1980 and 1983 in almost 60 per cent of the countries with Fund-assisted programmes. With falling output and, at best, mixed evidence about changes in income distribution in many developing countries, the number of people in poverty in many "adjusting countries" increased.3/

Of the 10 third world case studies carried out in the UNICEF study, the authors had something positive to say only for one of them.

> The number of people below a given poverty line has almost certainly increased in Ghana, the Philippines, Chile, Jamaica, Peru and until 1984, Brazil. Only for South Korea is there evidence of declining absolute poverty. The situation is unclear in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Botswana.4/

Gone, therefore, are the days of "equity". The current orthodoxy is "adjustment with a human face" and the protection of the "vulnerables" who are victims of the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank/IMF. Let the Bank explain its own philosophy:

> The Bank seeks to assist governments in identifying ways and means of mitigating adjustment costs and to modify the design of the policy and institutional measures accordingly. During the implementation of the adjustment programme, the government and the Bank need to monitor closely any negative impact of the programme on the most vulnerable sections of the population and help to develop compensatory programmes, targeted on the affected groups as required 5/

It is in the context of this overall strategy of the WB/IMF that the "participatory" approach is now advocated. The UNICEF study goes on to outline this strategy:

> Two elements would strengthen governments' ability and determination to achieve adjustment with a human face. On the one hand, Community participation (emphasis by the authors) can play a critical role – in helping to formulate policy, in providing the administrative mechanisms for aspects of the programme... and in providing resources of labour and food to pay for some basic services.... On the other hand, the international community (emphasis authors') can also play a crucial supporting role by providing additional resources for governments which adopt policies that protect the vulnerable and promote growth (emphasis by YT) and by being prepared to reallocate their own existing commitments to these ends 6/ Contrary to the conventional approach – by which reduction of external and internal imbalances is achieved by demand and import restraints, often entailing a decline in GDP as well as in investment in physical and human capital – adjustment with a human face involves a restructuring of the economy so that major imbalances are eliminated at a satisfactory level of output and investment while human capacities are maintained and developed."

Policy-makers in Africa are fast imbibing this new ideology of development. For example, at the end of the 10 May, 1989 "consultation" between the World Bank, and among others, the African Development Bank and the ECA, a Joint Statement was issued, the most important parts of which read:

> ... it has become clear that adjustment must be seen as part of a long-term development approach and that it must take full account of the human dimension. .
>
> While sustainable economic growth is imperative, it is only the means to the overarching objective of improving human welfare – for example, reducing infant mortality, increasing educational opportunity, improving health and ensuring food security. ... Particular attention should be given to protecting the vulnerable groups during the adjustment process....8/

This is as far as the official debate has reached in Africa as of today. "Growth" with protection for the "vulnerables" is the new strategic objective of "development". It is an admission that a comprehensive programme of equity is no longer attainable; all that can be done is to save the dying and the most afflicted victims of structural adjustment programmes.

In line with this policy, for example, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and other allied organizations now talk of "selective", not "comprehensive", medical care, concentrating on the six most common diseases among children and not the gamut of other illnesses to which they fall victims; and "vertical" treatment of selected diseases, not a holistic and community-based programme of health care. Furthermore, most northern non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa, even those that call themselves "developmental" organizations, have become simply "welfare outposts" of aid agencies to save the "vulnerables" from the catastrophic consequences of the World Bank-IMF-directed "structural adjustment" programmes.

That is how matters stand at the present. It is against this background that "popular participation" has entered the lexicon of development literature and development strategies, and we turn now to an analysis of this concept.

Conflicting conceptions of "participation"

Like "development", participation" too has myriad meanings. We discuss below only four of these that we regard as significant for our discussion.

(a) Participation as mobilization (for production)
(b) Participation in decision-making (for democratic rule)
(c) Participation as other-empowerment (power "abnegation")
(d) Participation as self-empowerment (power seizure)

The first concept is as old as history, and goes back to the age when slaves were "mobilized" to build colossal pyramids in the memory of dead Pharaohs. It is a skill developed in our own epoch by colonial rulers who mobilized the colonized peoples to build (with free labour) roads, ditches and "bomas", a skill now further perfected by our present rulers in Africa who, in the name of "socialism", even "Marxism-Leninism", "mobilize" the peasantry into "ujamaa" villages, or "resettlement" programmes, or "food for work" programmes. Participation, here, means simply the provision of labour.

However persuasive (or self-deluding) the ideological embellishments to this kind of "participation", it is, stripped of the flummery, no more than extraction of labour from the wretched and the poor. These are the "participatory" projects of today - women who are "mobilized" to dig wells for their water from which they are first deprived and distanced by elite-serving policies, men who are "mobilized" to mould bricks (without payment for their labour) to build schools for their children in the name of "self-help" or "Harambee!" because the central government funds go to equip schools for the children of the rich with computer gadgetry, etc. These "participatory" projects are different from the Pharaohic pyramids and the colonial pit-latrines only in form and detail.

The second concept - participation in decision-making - corresponds to the "social democratic" variant of the development concept that we discussed above, and has arisen in similar circumstances. It serves the same objective of "reforming the system without yielding its essence. Participation in "decision-making" at various levels of State authority is only a concession made to the "democratic" principle that the masses must be seen to have participated in the making of the laws and regulations that legitimize the appropriation of their labour.

Sometimes "participation' takes the form of "decentralization", meaning the "grass-roots" are "given" the authority to participate in the formulation and implementation of their own development programmes. In reality, however, nothing

of the kind happens. "Decentralization" is only looking at the other end of the telescope from what in reality is centralization. I know from practical experience in the field of local government in Africa that decentralization has never – but never – meant genuine participation by the grass-roots in determining their destiny. Policies that really matter are always determined from "on high" and gravitate downwards towards the lower echelons of social hierarchy, whilst surplus value moves upwards from the socially and politically deprived to those who have power and wealth.

The concept of "worker participation" in capitalist enterprise is yet another example of the co-optive character of the concept of "participation". We need only look at the level and kinds of "decision-making" allowed to workers by management to understand the obviously duplicitous use of the word "participation" – give the worker a "sense of participation" while surrendering nothing to him/her in terms of real control.

Therefore, much of what passes in the name of "participation in decision-making" to the lower classes of society (peasants and workers) is duplicitous and, sometimes, cynically dishonest. Let us be candid enough to admit that extant "socialist" bureaucracies are as guilty of this kind of dishonesty as the free enterprising capitalists.

The third and fourth concepts – participation as empowerment – arise out of the struggles of the working people against those who have economic and political power. Once again it used to be called participation for "liberation", but it has now been replaced by the term "empowerment", mainly because the term "liberation" got almost exclusively appropriated by the liberation movements fighting against colonialism and racism. Whatever the relative merits of the term "empowerment" as against "liberation", both terms, for our purposes, have the same political meaning.

We distinguish between two variants of participation as empowerment. The concept of participation as "other empowerment" is a patronizing variant of participation as "self empowerment". It is patronizing because here "empowerment" is undertaken at the behest of the powerful who feign to transfer power from themselves to the grassroots, from top to the bottom. It is as if they are the ones who are empowering the lower classes. The lower classes do not take power, they are "given" it.

In reality, history tells us, the top-dogs seldom transfer power voluntarily. They "empower" the under-dogs:

- only to the extent that it suits their interest,
- or to co-opt the under-dogs into the system,
- or to forestall "worse" things happening.

Finally, we have, of course, participation as "self-empowerment" which comes about as an exercise of collective will on the part of the disempowered themselves. Here the powerless seize power on their own initiative and for their own sake – like what happened in the French Revolution and the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. What happens after the people have seized power is, of course, another issue, for as the "Restorations" of post-Napoleonic France and the recent happenings in Eastern Europe and China show, the process of peoples' seizing power has its own ups and downs.

But before we leave this subject, we have almost an obligation to say something about the origin of the concept of "participation" and how it came to be distorted in recent times.

A brief history of the concept of "participation"

"Participation" actually is a part-substitution of the concept of "conscientisation" which was first introduced by Paulo Freire in his The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and subsequently popularized by every self-respecting "animator" who worked in the area of mobilizing the poor and the wretched of the earth to help them shake off their shackles of exploitation and oppression. Left intellectuals carrying out research in peasant communities in the third world found a new meaning for "research" - one that was not purely academic but was involved in "praxis". Let one of the pioneers of "participatory research" explain the concept himself:

> The Cartagena World Symposium of 1977... launched the methodology now known as Participatory Action Research (PAR). ... PAR has shown itself to be an endogenous intellectual and practical creation of the peoples of the Third World. ... Its main components derive from the regional appearance and diffusion of theories of dependence (Cardoso, Furtado) and exploitation (Gonzalez, Casanova), the counter theory of subversion (Camilo Tores) and the theology of liberation (Gutierrez), dialogical techniques (Freire) and the reinterpretation of these on scientists' commitment and neutrality taken from Marx and Gramsci, among others....
>
> Its aim is to achieve "power" and not merely "growth" for the grass-roots population. This total process simultaneously encompasses adult education, scientific research and political action in which critical theory, situation analyses and practice area are seen as sources of knowledge.9/

Here is another clarification:

> Participation has to be conceived as an active process where the initiatives are taken by the people themselves guided by their own thinking, and using means and processes (institutions and mechanisms) over which they can exert effective control. The people decide, act and reflect on their actions as conscious subjects. This concept has to be distinguished from passive participation which only involves people in actions that have been thought out or designed by others and controlled by others.10/

After this we need only say that like all good words invented by the left intellectuals trying to find a space for themselves, "participation" too has got co-opted into the vocabulary of the dominant classes and, as our earlier quotation from the IMF Journal shows, it has become the opposite of what it was supposed to mean. In its distorted version, participation has simply become a "methodology" or a "technique" for "mobilizing" the "masses" so that capital investment projects are successfully implemented, or so that free or poorly paid labour is extracted from the people to carry out the "structural adjustment" of the economy whose social ill-consequences for the "vulnerables" are ameliorated through programmes that give such adjustments a "human face".

Some practical experiences in participatory development

We must distinguish between three kinds of experiences:

(a) Genuine experiences in self-empowerment;
(b) Partial successes in self-empowerment; and
(c) Prostitution of the participatory process.

Some practitioners of the "participatory" approach have recorded significant achievements in the genuinely "self-empowering" sense of the term. Thus, for example, Orlando Fals-Borda recorded that in Southern Colombia an active group of intellectuals and political cadres worked with the peasants and the result was a research-oriented popular movement which influenced the struggles of the local black communities, especially in the towns of Perto Tejada and Caloto. Similar work was done in Mexico among the local Otomi Indians and Mestizo peasants of Mezquital Valley.11/ In June, 1989 I attended a conference in Managua where the Minister of Education graphically explained how the participatory approach to education was the key to the conscientization of the population in preparing them for the revolution against the Somoza regime.

However, the vast majority of the "participatory development" efforts fall into the third kind of experience i.e. they are corrupt versions of the participatory model as defined above by Fals-Borda and Tilakaratna.

The principal reason for this corruption has been the enormous amount of "development aid" that has poured into the third world. Much of this "aid" is through official bilateral and multilateral channels. Since early 1980s, however, there has been an incredible proliferation of the so-called "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) involved in "development" with the grass-roots people. Much of this started out in the early 1970s as acts of "solidarity" by peoples and churches of the "first world" towards the "suffering people" of the "third world". In the 80s, however, the governments of the "first world" began taking an increasing interest in these "NGOs" as conduits to channel capital into the third world. Thus, according to OECD figures, during the 80s, the NGOs in the OECD countries annually channelled $ 2.9 billion into the third world countries on their own account, and another $ 1.5 billion on behalf of their governments. Thus, about 15 per cent of the total ODA funding is now channelled through these NGOs.12/

The attraction that northern governments have for their NGOs as conduits for channelling capital is that the northern NGOs:

(a) Have support of the ordinary people in their countries who want to "do something" for the "poor" people of the third world;

(b) Are seen to be more sensitive about third world concerns;

(c) Are sensitive to ecological concerns;

(d) Have "appropriate" technologies; and

(e) Are flexible and non-bureaucratic.

In reality, however, whilst the northern NGOs are indeed more flexible and "sensitive" than their governments, most of them, objectively, carry out two kinds of functions:

(a) They open up "virgin" land and "subsistence" labour in the third world to "the market" for exploitation by western industrial corporations selling tractors, hybrid seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and industrial machinery;

(b) They perform the "welfarist" role that fits into the "adjustment with a human face" strategy of the World Bank/IMF. Many of the northern NGOs that used to "target" their funds onto what they used to call "the poorest of the poor" now increasingly and consciously target these to "the vulnerables" in the third world societies.

This is not to dismiss the genuinely humanitarian concern that many of those who work for northern NGOs feel towards the people of the third world. Unfortunately, their subjective feelings have very little to do with the objective role their organizations play in our countries. Through a lack of a proper understanding of the socio-political context of African development, and through the infusion of "easy" money that go to subsidize production, the northern NGOs have wittingly or unwittingly killed the initiative of the grassroots people and made them purely passive recipients of "aid". This process is further assisted by the fact that most African NGOs are headed by bureaucracies whose life styles depend on securing money for the local NGOs for which they work. They have learnt the skills to write projects for fund raising, part of which (in some cases as much as 50 per cent) then goes to "overheads" including their salaries and benefits, and part goes to buy tractors, seeds, fertilizers, sewing machines and water pumps.

This is the story with regards to most of the "grassroots" organizations in Africa which purport to be "participatory". This is not to say that these kinds of "participatory" projects do not benefit the people: they do benefit some of them. But they are not participatory in the self-empowering sense. In fact, the people lose their sense of dignity in the process of creating a dependence for donor funding for the sake of "mere survival".

Finally, there are those experiences where the local effort has been partly successful in self-empowerment. Such organizations as the Se servir de la saison sèche en savane et au Sahel (Six-S in Burkina Faso, the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe, and Action pour le développement rural integré (ADRI) in Rwanda are examples of such organizations.[13] These are genuinely indigenous efforts aimed at building on the initiatives and resources of the people. However, insofar as they too have become dependent for much of their work on external donor funding, they have lost that degree of independence which is necessary for them to be self-reliant. Also, in the case of many of these locally-initiated efforts, there is so much that centres around the charisma or strong leadership of one or two persons that the extent to which they are genuinely democratic must be seriously questioned. Furthermore, as recipients of donor funding, many of them become islands of relative privilege surrounded by a sea of poverty of the people not so well organized or skilled to know how to secure donor funding.

This, then, is one of the fundamental weaknesses of even those organizations which are genuinely based on local initiatives. Unless their efforts can provide an alternative development strategy repeatable and implementable at a national level, their success will continue to remain only partial. Of course, the difficulties and dangers of "going national" cannot be underestimated. As ORAP's Sithembiso Nyoni explains:

Village-level development organizations that begin to take seriously their situation and start to organize for change often tend to threaten national governments' perceptions of their overall responsibility for the populations under their charge. Consequently, such organizations, when they are tolerated, tend to remain focused at the local village level, and to restrict themselves to local village projects outside of the regional or national context. As such, their impact is bound to remain localized and ineffective.14

Conclusion: Role of continental organizations such as the ECA

Because of the conference requirement to keep this paper short we cannot discuss this very important and strategic question at length. We shall only throw a few (what might appear to be controversial) ideas for further brainstorming.

First, we think it is important that the ECA does not endorse the "adjustment with a human face" strategy of "development" which is currently in vogue. This is not to say that the ECA, or for that matter any continental organization, should not be concerned about the fate of those people who are victims of the economic system imposed on the people of Africa. Such a stand of unconcern for the plight of the people cannot be morally defensible. What is argued, rather, is that any pan-African organization cannot allow its credit to be used to legitimize a system of exploitation that impoverishes the people of AFrica, and then is called upon to "patch up" the damage.

Secondly, the ECA, if it is genuinely interested in participatory development, must learn from the historical experiences of the people themselves. Ever since the imposition of colonialism on Africa, the people have reacted in one of three ways: they have passively succumbed to oppression and exploitation; or they have adapted to the new situation by actively creating institutions to fit with the new regime of oppression; or they have actively resisted oppression.15

If the last twenty years of AFrican experience has anything to teach us it is that the situation of the lower classes in Africa is far worse today than two decades ago, and that the spirit of resistance is increasing. No amount of "adaptation" through World Bank or UNICEF inspired "gymnastics" of trying to "humanize oppression" through providing hand-outs to the "vulnerables" will pacify a people for the vast majority of whom their only future is unemployment and impoverishment.

Thirdly, the ECA has an obligation to provide to the policy-makers in Africa with a thoroughgoing expose of the manner in which corporate capital exploits the people of Africa. This capital, we must add, includes that provided by organizations like the African Development Bank (ADB) whose only African-ness is the first name in its title, but which otherwise is very much part and parcel of international finance capital.

Fourthly, and in view of the fact that the struggle against exploitation and oppression is not just an AFrican problem but one which concerns the people in the other parts of the third world as well as all progressive people in the "first world" it is necessary that the ECA actively links up with all those individuals and organizations who are in favour of a world of economic justice and political democracy. This is not as abstract an objective as it might sound. In the "first world" they have created institutions like Amnesty International founded on a commitment to protect certain categories of human rights. The mandate of these organizations could be expanded; alternatively, new institutions can be founded, at the initiative of the

people of the third world, whose mandate includes monitoring the economic rights of the people as well as their political rights.

Finally, there are a number of genuinely grass-roots organizations in Africa which have secured a certain measure of success at "participatory development" in the sense of collective self-empowerment by the people. The ECA needs to carry out a detailed study of their experiences and difficulties, and to facilitate collective reflection on the way forward for them.

The last five hundred years of slavery, capitalism and bureaucratic variants of socialism have been years of unmitigated war against both nature and labour in Africa (as indeed in other parts of the world). We need to think of new directions for a more civilized world than what the last 500 years have offered.

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UNITED NATIONS
Economic Commission for Africa

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by
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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

12-16 February 1990
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Summary

What went wrong with Africa? Why is a continent so rich in resources suffering so much malnutrition, hunger, disease, and poverty? And why are its people not acting more effectively to change the situation? What actions should they be taking? These are the key questions this paper poses.

This paper examines the failure of development policy to date in Africa, analysing not only its effects but also its causes. In response to the question, "How to unleash the talents and energies of African people to participate in their own development and transformation, the paper suggests that the African people be allowed and encouraged to develop a level of consciousness to the prevalent crisis. It outlines a simple model that assists groups in structural analysis and explains that enlarging the role of Africans in the transformation process will require challenging and overthrowing "the ideology of the experts".

Africans' critical consciousness would create a popular understanding and awareness of the extent, nature and root causes of the problem. It would lead people to break "the culture of silence" and they would realize that they have the power to change their circumstances.

"The vision of a new society in Africa will need to be developed in Africa, born out of the African historical experience and the sense of continuity of African history. The African is not yet master of his own fate, but neither is he completely at the mercy of fate."(1)

Western scholars and governments, development practitioners and Africans themselves are now asking "what went wrong?" with prosperity. Three decades later, the reality is "a vicious interaction between excruciating poverty and abysmally low levels of productivity in an environment characterized by serious deficiencies in basic and social infrastructures" (2) and that "basic rights, individual freedom and democratic participation by the majority are often lacking in Africa." (3) Others ask more seriously what is the difference between now and the days of colonialism or the days of slavery. Is the difference not the same? Each era uses a different approach; always with the same result - an unbearable human condition bereft of self-determination and dignity.

The question of what went wrong is an important one to answer. Equally important is the issue of the role of Africans in promoting or abating this state of affairs. Where is the intellectual capacity of Africans, schooled or unschooled? Why has it not succeeded in arresting this great slide into poverty and dependence. Is that capacity able to see reality and name it and can that capacity do something about the African reality? This poses the fundamental question to be addressed by this paper on: How to unleash the Talents and energies of African people for their own development and transformation. This Conference has been organized on the assumption that Africans are not subjects in the processes that have given rise to the conditions that entrap them. It proposes that there is a key role for Africans to play in the transformation of their societies. However, if Africans are not the key actors in shaping their societies, who then are the key actors and to whose advantage? Are they willing to give up that advantage?

This paper gives a perspective on aspects of the African reality that have yet to be included in the scenario already built up by ECA on the African crisis. It proposes, among other things, that the level of consciousness of the African people to the crisis be raised in order that they might take action for the transformation of their communities and of Africa. As experiences to date have shown, the differences of economic interest and political power make it unreasonable to expect the political will that is necessary for systematic change in Africa to come from those in power. It must be fostered by mass movements that give central focus to the basic rights of the poor, and demand a reorientation of policies, programmes and projects to that end. For this to occur, there must be the opening of political processes to accommodate greater expression of opinions and dissent, as well as participation by everyone in the decisions that affect their lives at all levels. Unleashing the vast potential of Africans to transform their continent will require consciousness raising, political participation by the majority of people and new economic and political orders at both national and international levels.

The process of transformation implies a recognition that the root causes of poverty are inadequate structures and systems which give rise to opportunities for oppression, exploitation and injustice. Transformation suggests the need to build new economic, political, legal and education structures.

In order to do so, people need to analyze their situation and find out the root causes of poverty and reorganize themselves in such a manner as to eliminate opportunities for exploitation. The underlying assumption is that structures are created by those in power to serve their own interests. If only few are in power, the interest of the majority is not served. Transformation aims to empower all so that all are involved in creating structures that serve the interest of all. People in the transformation process must be the subjects of their destiny. Development as practised in Africa today has come to mean putting in place the basic infrastructure that would compare Africa favorably with parts of the 'developed' world. The methodology for doing this is imported from outside of Africa, so are the resources. Poverty is interpreted as the lack of such infrastructure, the lack of resources to get them or even manage them. Development practice seeks to ensure that the resources are made available through grants or loans and that education and training will enable people to manage their resources in such a manner as to alleviate poverty. The people participate more as objects of the development process than as subjects. The following chart gives a comparative outline of the different approaches that might be employed based on what the cause of poverty is believed to be.

A clear definition of terminology is necessary for approaching the topic in a coherent manner. From the definition given above, it is clear that development and transformation, though both refer to change, cannot be used interchangeably. Neither is our present approach to development a necessary prerequisite for transformation. Three decades of global effort have gone into development for Africa. The end result to date is what the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has described as the African crisis, so severe that it challenges the very survival of the African people. (4) The majority of African people live at subsistence level. "The African crude facts are that two-thirds of the rural population and one-third of the urban population remain below the absolute poverty level." (5) More than 50 per cent of the least developed countries are on the African continent.

This whole situation exists not for the lack of trying. Time, money and great effort has gone into trying to stop the landslide into poverty. We are reminded by ECA that in 1979, no less an organization than the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity adopted the Monrovia Strategy as Africa's input into the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Decade in the 1980s. In 1980, the same organization adopted the Lagos Plan of Action for implementing the Monrovia strategy with the primary objective of alleviating poverty and improving the standard of living of the African people. (6) This was followed by the Final Act of Lagos to promote subregional economic co-operation and integration. The subregional organizations are in place but so is poverty. The accessible supply of clean water, full security of person and possession are not quite in place yet and the human dignity is long eroded.

FOUR RESPONSES TO POVERTY

	1	2	3	4
A. Causes of the Problem	Circumstances beyond the control of local people Natural disasters Bad luck	Lack of Education Lack of resources causing low standard of living	Exploitation Domination Oppression	Inadequate structures
B. Goals	To retrieve suffering	To raise production To subdue nature	To challenge and overcome exploitative structure	To build new economic political, legal and education structures
C. Service programmes	Famine relief Refugee centres Care of disabled Child care Clinics	Technical training in agriculture, home industries, income pro-during activities, health care, savings and credit	Trade Unions, political parties and movements Conscientization pro-	Conscientization programmes Alternative structures, co-ops, workers councils, New forms of Education
D. Type of change involved	FUNCTIONAL CHANGE ← Non-conflictual models		STRUCTURAL CHANGE → Conflictual models	
E. Type of leadership	Strong reliance on authority	Consultative	Shared but delegation of authority from base up strong discipline	Animation, enabling participatory Shared responsibility
F. Inspiration	Charity Help the poor	Help people to help themselves Vatican II	Liberation theology Denouncing evil Announcing Good	"Behold I make all things new"
G. Type of service	WELFARE	DEVELOPMENT	LIBERATION	TRANSFORMATION

Reprinted from Training for transformation, Book III Hope A., Timmel, S., Hodzi C. Mambo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 1984.

40. However, it must be emphasized that in the context of the long-run, sustained economic growth, though necessary, will neither be sufficient nor, indeed, possible without a fundamental transformation aimed at removing the debilitating distortions in the present economic and social structures. In this context, it is pertinent to emphasize that socio-economic transformation has hitherto tended to be equated with a process of economic and social modernization that tries merely to replicate the patterns of production, consumption and institutions that prevail in the developed countries. This confusion has marred the proper conceptualization, design and implementation of a transformation process whose content and parameters are in resonance with African values and realities. This sombre realization points to the necessity for a new African transformation ethic that incorporates, rather than alienates, the present and future African realities - economic, political, social, cultural and environmental." (7)

It is important to explain that the socio-economic structures established in Africa during colonial times were put in place to ensure the flow of Africa's wealth to Western Europe. The establishment of these structures and necessary infrastructure, roads, railways, schools, churches, the civil service were an investment that brought excellent returns to its designers.

At the dawn of independence, Africa opted for a modernization approach to its development. This meant that every attempt would be made to forge African patterns of production, consumption, values and institutions in the image of those in Western Europe. This option was taken despite opposition from strong nationalists who wanted an African approach to development. The former colonial masters were more comfortable with the modernization approach and gave full support to the countries that took this option. Guinea (Conakry) was a classic example of a country opting for an African approach only to incur the full disapproval and subsequent departure of the French. The option for the modernization approach meant that modern technology and expert advisors (preferably from Europe) had to be brought in on an even larger scale than in colonial times to speed up the modernization process. International agencies put up a massive machinery to help Africa accomplish this goal.

Freire describes such an option as symptomatic of a state of false consciousness, where the oppressed, immediately after overthrowing the oppressor, (8) observe how present African elite copy their colonial masters. Notice also the behaviour of soldiers right after coup d'Etats in Africa. They immediately unquestioningly take over the houses, cars and behaviour of their former oppressors. However, the expense of being like the oppressor without the means or philosophy of the oppressor leads to the same corruption and bribery which caused the coup in the first place.

In this state of false consciousness Africa once again turned over control of its development to the Western group of nations. They had the expertise and the money to make modernization/development happen. But this time Africa had to pay for the help by borrowing money to buy the technology and pay for the expertise using its raw materials as its source of wealth.

In so doing, African Governments set themselves up as guardians of people and put control of the peoples' destiny in the hands of foreign experts. The role of the African people was reduced to being guided and providing the labour to produce the primary commodities which would pay for the technology and experts. However, with falling commodity prices Africa became a net exporter of capital.

The preference for European consumables without the funds to pay for them has cost Africa dearly. The debt crisis is one manifestation. More latent are the nutrition imbalances, infant and maternal mortality rates, the deep crisis of confidence, the complete dependency syndrome and resulting excruciating poverty.

Africa depends on external sources of finance, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), multinational corporations and commercial banks for purchasing the consumables. The IMF is notorious for the inflexibility of its lending policies, even in these times of crisis. However, all of these institutions are seldom responsive to the needs of African borrowers because their loyalties lie elsewhere. The multinational corporations and the commercial banks are driven by the profit motive and the multilateral lenders owe their obedience to those who contribute the most to their budgets. For example, because voting in the World Bank is weighted by monetary contributions, low-income countries constitute only 35 per cent of decision-making capacity. (9) Being in desperate need of finance and technology, African countries then agree to abide by the rules of "aid".

The African crisis is sharply reflected in the lives of the people of Africa. Monthly family income is barely able to support family survival for more than a week. The people who had least to say at the negotiating table (the rural majority, women and the urban poor in Africa) are the hardest hit. As the debtor nations have turned to their creditors and the industrialized nations for help, they have found themselves straddled with the conditions of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). Structural adjustment programmes generally require cuts in public spending and export promotion. Unfortunately, export promotion of cash crops usually occurs at the expense of domestic food production in the third world. The cuts in public spending - freezing wages and unemployment, cutting food and fuel subsidies and expenditure on health and education - are felt in people's stomachs before they are felt in government coffers. Balance-of-payments deficits mean that a region that is expected to import one-third of its food needs by the year 2000 (10) will not be able to feed its people. The Economist argues that it is the middle class rather that the poor who bear the brunt of the policies because they are the main recipients of government spending and subsidies.

> "The scope for cutting public spending in developing countries without hurting the poor is broad enough for stabilization to succeed ... In the short term, adjustment is a threat to the middle classes, not the poor. Later everybody gains." (11)

The editors of the Economist are mistaken. We cannot know what will happen "later" and therefore cannot dispute the conclusion of their statement. However, we do know that the impact of the SAP cutbacks include poor nutrition and sanitation, increasing mortality (especially child and maternal), decreasing employment and the possibility of political and civil turmoil. And these affect the poor as much as, if not more than, the middle class. The middle class, at least, has an option to leave the country.

One of the saddest examples of these far-reaching effects of the whole situation is the effect on women. The SAPs have coincided with a time when the Decade for Women has raised the hopes of many African women, who are the poorest of the poor. African women are now expecting greater access to education, health care and credit, such as are required for them to adequately fulfill their productive and reproductive roles. However, they will be called upon, as the primary producers of food and health care, to fill in the gaps created by cuts in government expenditure. Already it has become imperative for African women to begin the work day at 3-4 a.m. rather than at 5-6 a.m. An imbalance between the nurturing roles and the economic roles of women is inevitable under these circumstances and already quite manifest in the ways women must now organize their days to make ends meet. Economic constraints have created conditions which have exposed women to higher probabilities of violence and lessened the opportunities for them to extricate themselves from environments that do violence to them. The development of women is in danger of never becoming a reality as literacy programmes, nursery schools, health care, extension workers and all such support services fade. Even though African women have proven themselves to be the masters of survival, these facts refute the argument that the poor will not suffer as much as the middle class. And in the big picture of African development, it would appear that there is little chance of meeting the hopes that have been generated.

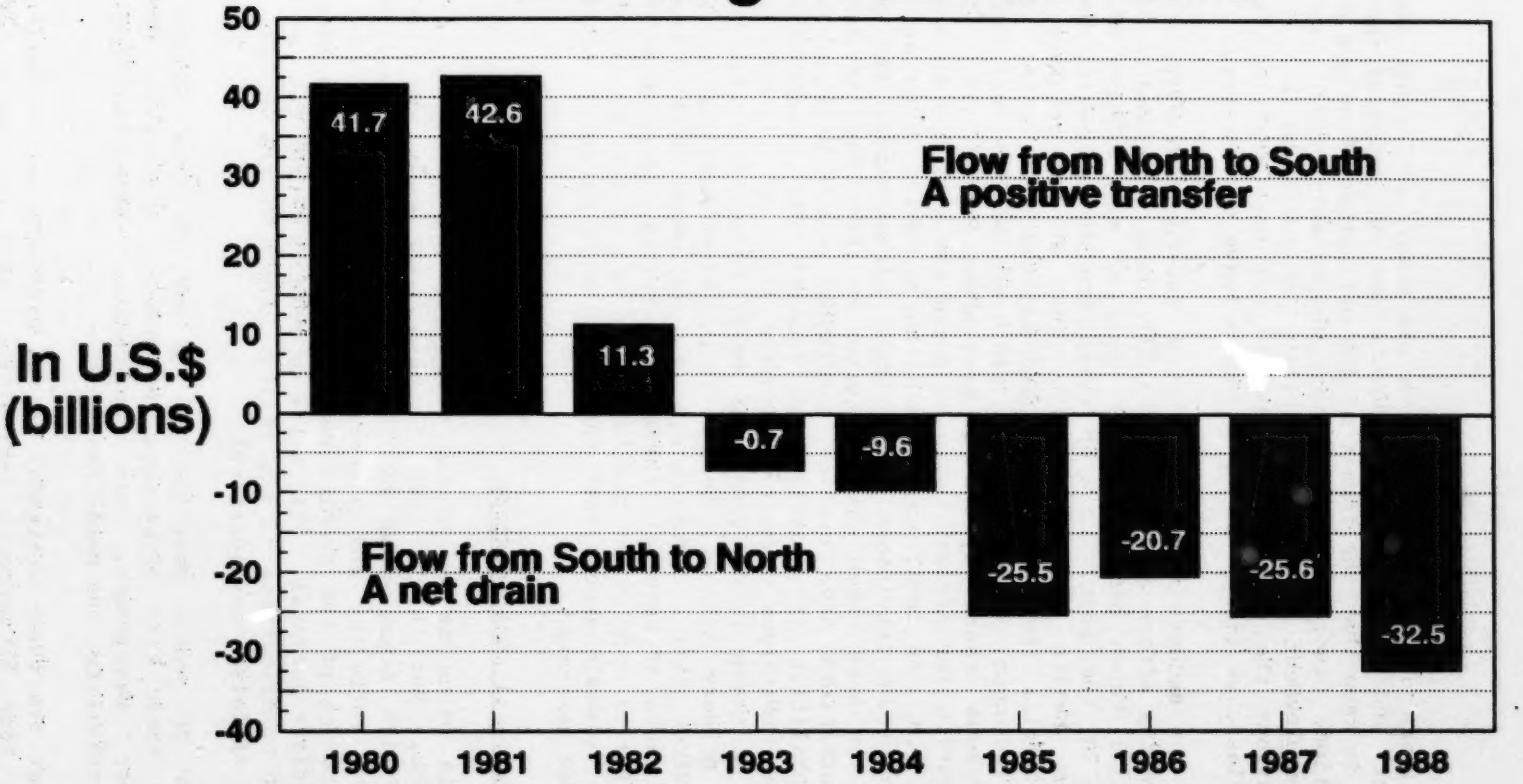
Developing critical consciousness

All this being as it is one would have expected a mass movement for transformation. But this is not the case. The anger and distress at this state of affairs seems muted by the usual African cultural trait of high tolerance for suffering and hardships. Consciousness of the full extent, nature and causes of the problem seems blunted by pressing needs and action towards immediate survival. This state of affairs brings into serious question the level of consciousness of the African people to the crisis. Is it still at the level of false consciousness?

> How do people describe and to what do they ascribe the changes in their life situation: corruption, witchcraft, greedy leaders, poor management, bad government, neo-colonialism, political instability, the World Bank-IMF?
>
> What are their attitudes to the difficulties, suffering and changes in life situation: resignation, wait for God's justice, better leaders and better government would help, more hard work is needed, other countries must be better than mine?

Africa, A Net Exporter of Capital

Reversing Financial Flows



Developing Nations: Net Transfer of Resources 1980-1988

Sample of 98 nations - covers private direct investment, private loans, official flows
Source: UN World Economic Survey 1989
Published by the UN Department of Public Information September 1989

> What actions do they take to improve their lives: continue begging for help, pray more and join religious groups, change leaders, overthrow governments, work hard and get others to work harder and more systematically, move abroad where it is more comfortable?

If indeed there were popular understanding and awareness of what the true extent, nature and root causes of the problem are and if, for a brief moment in time, there were popular belief that people have the power to change their circumstances, there would be a movement for transformation in Africa. Awareness of the problem is fundamental to applying one's energies and talents to it. What is required now is for the consciousness of our reality to be raised to the level of critical consciousness which enables people to read the world, not just the word. That is, it enables a clear description of reality and an analysis of the root causes of that reality rather than just the symptoms.

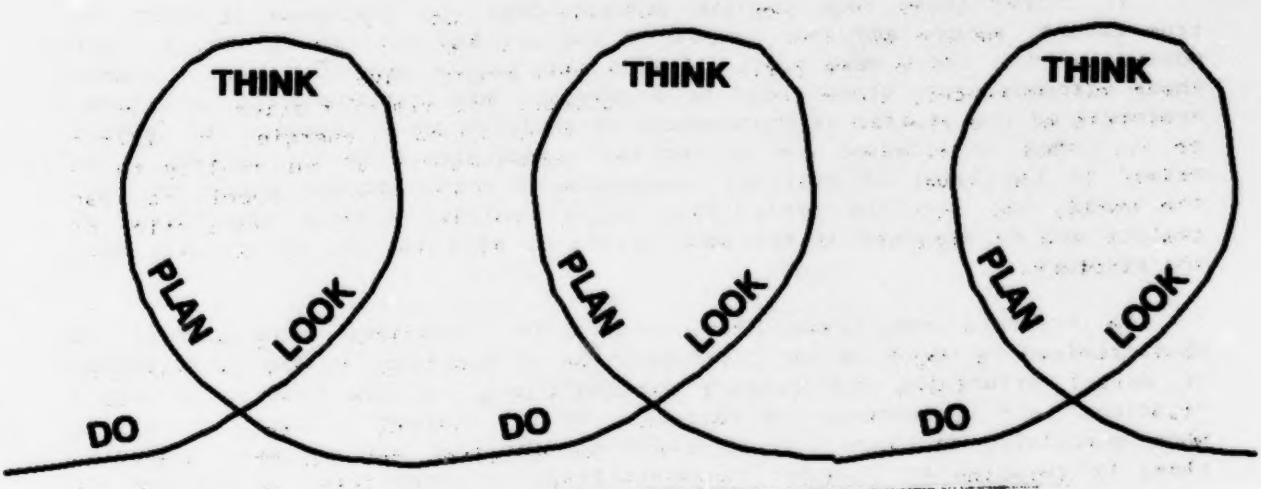
In Freire's own words, "the critically transitive consciousness is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems, by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations: by the testing of one's "findings" and by openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by receptivity to the new for reasons beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old - by accepting what is valid in both old and new. Critical transitivity is characteristic of authentically democratic regimes and corresponds to highly permeable, interrogative, restless and dialogical forms of life - in contrast to silence and inaction, in contrast to the rigid, militarily authoritarian state presently prevailing in Brazil, an historical retreat which the usurpers of power try to present as a re-encounter with democracy. There are certain positions, attitudes and gestures associated with the awakening of critical awareness, which occur naturally due to economic progress. These should not be confused with an authentically critical position, which a person must make his own by intervention in and integration with his own context. "Conscientizao" represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural by-product of even major economic changes, but must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favourable historical conditions."(12)

The following chart gives the various levels of consciousness or awareness, typical community attitudes that exemplify each level and types of actions that animators could take.

Analysis a tool for critical consciousness

Progress towards acquiring a state of critical consciousness is enhanced and promoted by a constant process of analysis. Analysis helps community groups to reflect on root causes, to plan actions and evaluate the suitability of these actions. The process of analysis need not be complicated. A simple Freirian approach for helping participants engage in a process of critical reflection on what they are doing can be quite useful for community groups.

It is the constant process of action/reflection/action/reflection that helps groups to look for root causes to their problems a model for the process can be shown as follows:



It is an analysis of practice and process which develops amongst people the practice of thinking about practice. Often the tendency in popular conversation is to spend much time describing and bemoaning our life situation. To this must be added the additional aspects of analysis and planning for action. Hence the continuous process of action (do) analyssis (look, think) plan for action again.

In community groups, the process of getting to root causes is enhanced by the use of another Freirean technique of the analysis of codes. Codes are simple encapsulations of reality in an art form. Popular art forms should be used because they can be produced easily and they encourage participation. The codes should be analyzed by the use of the following questions:

> Clear and full description of <u>what is happening</u> or happened in the code with every one participating.
>
> <u>Why does it happen</u> continuously asking "but why" until the root cause is reached.
>
> <u>Does it happen here</u>(relating the code to own reality).
>
> <u>What can we do about it</u> (planning for action to eradicate root causes).

Levels of awareness

Level	FOUR LEVELS OF AWARENESS The Community situation Typical attitudes-actions	FOUR LEVELS OF AWARENESS Types of Assistance	
		Approaches that reinforce Present situation	Approaches which contributes to transformation
Closed or broken consciousness - Naive - Dependent - Alienated - Suppressed	Closed Societies, not open to change, or Broken societies where new patterns seem impossible to understand Culture of silence, fatalism or resignation "It must be the will of God" The way things are is the only way they can ever be Magical explanation for happenings, e.g. curses, bewitching Nature, culture and history are given to us not shaped by us, unquestioning acceptance of explanations of those in power, "that the rich deserve to be rich and poor are lazy and ignorant Unchanging repetition of activities to meet basic needs, traditional rituals, celebrating great deeds of the past but little effort to change present or future	Paternalistic approaches - doing things for people Responding to needs as emergencies free handouts. Building dependency Offering opportunities for advance of individuals but not developing communal responsibility for whole community Sharing life of the poor without getting involved with them in a struggle to transform the situation	Identifying social and economic classes Finding people and groups more aware, articulate, able to explain causes and influence others Finding aspects of local religion and culture with liberating message Enabling people to break the culture of silence to speak openly and honestly trusting their experience Gain skills by forming and running organizations to meet local needs
Awakening consciousness - Alert - Rebellious - Critical of people and events but not questioning established system	Signs of limited change, e.g. technology, building social patterns, conflicts developing between groups with different interests Awareness of inequality, injustice, not sharing "the fruits of independence, but dealing with symptoms, not root causes Attempts to reorganize some elements of economic, social and cultural life, e.g. demand for better wages, changed family relationships, greet faith in more opportunities for formal schooling Local actions to meet immediate needs, "Harambee" or self-help projetcs	Prompt action to satisfy immediate needs Regrouping of the people around local leaders who "take over" actions initiated by the community Small community development projects with authoritarian leadership which do not train people in democratic participation and decision-making	Enabling different groups to express their insights, expectations and reasons for action Searching for causes of injustice, developing new patterns of decision-making and small projects involving a process of joint planning action/reflection/action, etc. Avoiding taking "most aware" out of community, but channelling their insight and commitment into shared community responsibility
Reforming consciousness - Start of struggle to improve functioning of the system	Recognition of different classes with opposing interests, open conflicts Beginning of trade unions, farmers associations, etc, desire for self-determination, reliance on own reserves Moving from perception to analysis, starting to question "Why do the rich get richer while the poor get poorer?" "Why do some have so much power?"	Large organizations with centralized authoritarian patterns of work which impose ideology on others not challenging them to think for themselves Desire to share in economic growth but not questioning the type of growth	Models which help groups analyze situation critically and plan action Pinpointing clashes of interests - between classes in society - within the organization Constant dialogue between leaders and masses

Level	FOUR LEVELS OF AWARENESS The Community situation Typical attitudes-actions	FOUR LEVELS OF AWARENESS Types of Assistance	
	A struggle to share power in partnership with the ruling group, still little questioning of pyramid structure of authority or of some ruling class values, e.g., laws that protect property more than people Demands for higher wages, shorter hours, use of slogans Struggle for existing power positions, different faces at the top, not change of structure	Recognition of only one type of valid action Seeing politics primarily in terms of elections	Action/Reflection cycle leading to constant evaluation of values, aims and strategies Relate struggle to processes of history
Liberating and transforming consciousness	Development of new relationship between classes - Deep questioning of old values and express of new values - Creative development of new types of structures expressing these values Recognition that freedom is never achieved "once and for all". Therefore personal and group involvement is a permanent process of renewal and liberation, constantly guarding against new patterns of oppression	Over-emphasis on technology for the sake of efficiency Allowing tribal, racial or cultural differences to divide those who basically share the same interests Haphazard attacks on international imperialism rather than careful strategy	Support constant struggle within the movement to reflect on personal and organizational life Try creative new experiments Get rid of authoritarian structures Develop self-management and active participation at all levels Keep open communication with grass roots Building international solidarity and strong links with other groups involved in similar struggles

Reprinted from Training for Transformation Book III Hope A., Timmel, S., Hodzi C. Mambo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 1984.

The story is told of native Americans (American Indians) in Minnesota who had been approached by a wealthy church to state what their needs were in order that an appropriate package of assistance would be organized for them. The native Americans welcomed the initiative of the church and requested that they be given time to give thought to the matter. An answer would be given at a meeting to be arranged later. When church officials arrived for the next meeting the native Americans said yes they had indeed given great thought to the matter but remained greatly puzzled by one question to which they wanted an answer from the church. The question: why is it that you are so wealthy, you have so much extra to give and we are so poor we have to receive from you?

Structural analysis is also an important tool for developing critical consciousness. It should be undertaken at the micro and macro levels. It should start with the immediate circumstances and situation of the people and should be done by the people themselves. Because the local situation is very much affected by the larger system of society, there is also need to assist local groups to connect the analysis of the local situation to an analysis of the wider society within a global context.

A simple but useful model for assisting groups do structural analysis is to analyze the three basic subsystems of their society (political, economic, cultural) at both micro and macro levels. The analysis should be of the elements of the subsystem and how it works as well as how the subsystems inter-relate towards the liberation or oppression of the people.

"Economic and social subsystem (survival, production and reproduction)
- Chief means of production
- Who owns them
- Who works
- What is the mode of production? (What type of arrangement is there between who works for whom? Is it feudal, capitalistic?)
- Who controls distribution of goods? How?
- What different classes emerge from the mode of production?
- What are the relationships between the different classes?
- What effect does this have on relationships in families, different tribes, other groups, etc.?
- How does production relate to reproduction?

Organization level (political)
- Who has the power to make decisions?
- From which class are they?
- Who makes the laws?
- For whose benefit are they made?
- How are the laws enforced?

Beliefs and values (cultural)

What does the society believe about itself?
What are its chief values?
Are the expressed values and the actual values the same?
Who promotes official values? How?

Ask the group to reflect on their answers which have now been written on newsprint.

1. What links do you see between the different levels?
2. How is the economic situation influencing the legal and political level?
3. How do these two levels influence the level of values?
4. How are the real values and the expressed values of the people influencing the political and the economic levels?"(13)

The practice of analysis in order to develop critical consciousness is important if Africans are to take charge of turning the direction of the present crisis. We must take the time to think through carefully what we are doing and why and thus become subjects of our existence. All too often this process is left to experts. One of the fundamental premises of the development industry is the need for foreign experts for transfer of technology and resources to the underdeveloped world. However, it has sadly been noted that "expatriate technical co-operation officers did not always contribute very much to the transfer either of resources or technology." (14)

Confidence in experts

The premise of the game of development to date has been what might be called "the ideology of the expert". Those who make a career of development have always prided themselves on teaching others. Development policies and those who make them have often claimed, with the best intentions, authority to define the problems and strategies and in so doing have excluded the very people they aim to help. Unfortunately, the present development industry has not welcomed many Africans into its classroom for experts. The political and economic system, both nationally and internationally, is controlled by a small core (or centre) of wealthy elites. Technical knowledge that leads to increased productivity and wealth, also at the centre, is the driving force of the system, and the domain of the experts who are paid by the wealthy elite.

This entire state of affairs is further exacerbated by the crisis of confidence which Africa experiences. The methods of operations of the development industry rests on the premise that Africans, for a variety of good reasons, are unable to take responsibility for their own development. They are thought of as not having the expertise, experience, resources nor a sense of accountability to manage their own development. While the international community displays this attitude towards African Governments, the same attitude is displayed by governments and intellectuals to the bulk

of the African people. Who really believes that the ordinary African communities are able to take control of and successfully orchestrate the improvement of their own lives without the input of foreign capital and expertise? People have been systematically nurtured on a healthy diet of disregard for their own knowledge, systems, culture, food, etc., for two centuries.

The African Governments, many of whom now are no longer elected by the people, serve as intermediaries between the development machinery and the people, and have become an important part of that machinery. They interpret the needs of the people and administer foreign inputs for the benefit of the people. In fact, much of the blame for the failure of development efforts is usually attributed to weak management systems in these governments, corruption and lack of accountability. This weakness in the government structures and functioning has given rise to the ascendency of the expert.

Theoretically, African Governments determine the development strategies. However, in view of the great dependence on foreign finances, these governments must accept the advice of foreign advisers. These governments are more accountable to international agencies than to their own people. Civil servants themselves can explain how prepared they are for experts and missions and what their level of involvement, much less than leadership of, these missions are. Civil servants in some favourite countries now barely have time to be productive in the development process. They are constantly involved in the process of receiving missions and accommodating the priorities of aid agencies. There is little time in this process to consult the beneficiaries and little time for critical analysis. Even that is done by consultants and experts.

Environment for participation

In the late 1960s and all during the 1970s, radical thinkers examined the practice of development and admonished for a change in the direction of greater participation of the people. The ecumenical movement of the churches called for greater social justice and saw that this would not be possible without the participation of the people in the analysis of the causes of injustice and in making decisions to change the situation. Many of these writings and training for participatory development at the grass-roots can be found in the World Council of Churches, the Commissions for Social Justice of the Catholic Church and the conference of churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Latin American dialectics evolved in liberation theology and led to a great discomfort with the use of the word 'development'. A clear description of the reality (la realidad) of the Latin American situation which peasants were encouraged to make, showed that development was not taking place. It was necessary for peasants to develop critical consciousness, to seek to build a just society, to alleviate poverty and to liberate themselves from exploitation and oppression.

However, such an analysis is only possible where the environment encourages and permits free thinking, responsible expression of ideas and creative endeavours. The socio-political environment that exists in many African countries does not encourage any of these. Culturally also, Africans, particularly those south of the Sahara, seem to have difficulty graciously accepting the success of fellow Africans. Africans seem more at ease seeing foreigners in major control of economic undertakings than seeing fellow Africans. At the local level, there are many Africans who will not extend themselves and venture into major production undertakings for fear of running afoul with the political power or of being bewitched. To be successful, one seems to need the protection of a political grandfather or a good witchdoctor.

On a policy basis, the rules and regulations for productive enterprises are more in favour of foreign owners than of local owners. Even though Africans with the means are unable to invest at home either for political or social reasons, they are also neither able to invest seriously in a neighbouring African country. The climate in that country will favour non-Africans more. As a result, they invest abroad.

The outdated structures of the public sector serve largely to frustrate talented Africans who have acquired considerable experience and knowledge and would like to use the same for the common good. There is little space in these rigid structures to express opinions and undertake creative endeavours. Besides, knowing too much threatens the authority and status of others.

Breaking the culture of silence

The environment for undertaking any social or structural analysis must be one that breaks the culture of silence and apathy. Analysis is couched in dialogue. Even if analysis begins at an individual level, it is necessary to draw as many participants as possible into the process of critical reflection. Such reflection on the root causes of problems would then lead to common decision-making on actions to take in order to solve problems or improve the conditions of life.

Breaking the culture of silence, though a major challenge given the political practices to which we have grown accustomed, should not be insurmountable. Africa is known to have an excellent tradition of dialogue and popular participation in decision-making. Amongst the Kpelles of Liberia, the Chief begins the discussion of any serious matter by first getting the opinion of the youngest and passes the matter on up the hierarchy until all opinions have been heard. His opinion is then merely a summary of the majority opinion.

Dissenting opinions are scarcely tolerated now due to very prevalent feelings of insecurity related to the fear of losing power and prestige, both personal and national. Men do not ask the opinions of their wives, teachers do not ask the opinions of students, managers do not ask the opinions

of workers, parents do not ask the opinion of children, and so forth. The only opinion that seems worth expressing is an opinion in agreement with those who have power to control your life, regardless of its base. The culture of silence weighs heavy on the continent. It has buried Africa's brightest and best and has tortured its bravest.

Communication is crucial to transformation. Not only communication from North to South, from the urban areas to the rural, but also communication from South to North, from rural to urban areas. Of paramount importance is information that flows from the people to the leaders. And because of its key role in development, there must be recognition of the disparities in access to or control of the means of communication. Radio, the most accessible means of communication, is invariably controlled by governments. The excitement for the new International Information Order wore off as soon as it became apparent that it meant giving a voice to the voiceless at home.

Transformation can not take place without dialogue. A true process of dialogue demands that all parties have equal time to listen and to speak. The present code of leadership opportions speaking time to leaders and listening time to the masses. Millions of Africans today are silent, either because they have little confidence that what they say has value in changing a powerful system, or, if they have confidence, will not say what should be said for fear of being dispossessed, even of life. True dialogue is based on deep respect for one another. It requires that each has faith in what the other has to say, trust that the other will express fully their thoughts, desire to listen accompanied by effort to help the other to express themselves and belief in and value for the other person's experiences. In view of the pervasiveness of the culture of silence, each one should begin to check his/her habit of listening. This applies particularly to those in leadership positions, by virtue of education, political, military, economic or religious power. A necessary first step to unleashing the talents and energies of Africans to participate in their own real development and transformation is to change the power structure of communication. A popular poster circulated in Liberia two years after the 1980 coup d'Etat showed a face with a padlock on the lips captioned my: MY EYES ARE OPEN.

It is in praise of the art of gracious writing that ECA will be forgiven couching the horror of the African crisis in such intellectualism:

> "In this context, it is pertinent to emphasize that socio-economic transformation has hitherto tended to be equated with a process of economic and social modernization that tries merely to replicate the patterns of production, consumption and institutions that prevail in the developed countries. This confusion has marred the proper conceptualization, design and implementation <u>of a transformation process whose content and parameters are in resonance with African values and realities</u>. This sombre realization points to the necessity for a new African transformation ethic that incorporates, rather than alienates, the present and future African realities - economic, political, social, cultural and environmental". (15)

Conclusion

This paper has proposed that the African transformation ethic will be born of Africans in dialogue with one another undertaking comprehensive analysis of their reality in an environment that allows this to happen. This process of analysis will help Africans to develop critical consciousness which is the foundation of transformation. Critical consciousness transfers the power of knowledge and the search for it to the people and not to the expert. It will use and develop the potential of the people to mount a frontal attack on poverty. It gives a voice to the voiceless to participate in decision-making and restores human dignity by making the people the subject of their own existence. Perpetuation of the present state of arrested false consciousness cuts us from our roots and leads to the great wandering of hapless people: intellectuals moving to Europe and America, a high percentage of the continent's population are refugees and the rest dying slowly at home.

How is the awakening to take place? Transformation of itself is a conflictual model. How can the process of transformation take place while at the same time avoiding the conflicts that are characteristic of the Latin-American experience of oppressed groups in society seeking liberation? Will those who have a vested interest in the resources of Africa, and their proteges in Africa allow a peaceful transformation to take place? The cases of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea (Conakry) are frightening examples of the powerlessness of Africans to control their own destiny.

If the struggle for independence could be fought and won, so can this.

The crisis, though bitter, presents an opportunity not to be missed. It should serve as a basis for discussion and action by community groups all over Africa. Where are the popular communicators to produce the Khartoum Declaration in popular form? In its present form, it will remain a document for expert meetings. Is it being discussed in the schools, not just for information and memorization, but for analysis and action? The reality of the crisis is the life of the people. It must be discussed in the villages for analysis and subsequent action. What analysis and discussions are taking place amongst interest groups - professionals, farmers, workers, women's groups? How can the analysis and actions of these groups complement each other to lead to national action?

The major constraints to critical analysis and action for transformation will come from those at home and abroad who feel their power threatened by popular analysis and popular action. Prominent in this category will be African Governments and the African elite who have had the power to control the lives of people and who benefit from the work of the people at the expense of the people. There have been some indications in the actions of African Governments towards more participation of people at the local level in decision making. The decentralization of planning and development giving local authorities more say in decision-making (disengagement du gouvernement or district focus) is a healthy one: care must be taken to ensure that the people and local authorities have carefully analyzed what they are doing and why.

The ascendance of "one-man states" and fathers of the nation should be analyzed for its potential to liberate or to oppress the people.

Wherever and whenever possible, Africans should encourage a "do-it-yourself" attitude. Knowledge is born of experience and reflection on that experience. Do it, analyze the experience and do it better the next time. Confidence is built on experience.

Planning and the role of planners will have to change where people become the subjects of their own transformation. Planners will become facilitators, helping to make linkages and making recommendations for policies that promote the action and participation of the people.

There must be popular reconsideration of the concept of Africa as a poor continent. Such popular analysis must look at the entire phenomena of resource flows out of Africa (see chart on Resource Flows.

At the community level there is much to analyze about resource flows from local communities; the migration of able-bodied and enlightened people to town, deforestation, marketing of agricultural products, allocation and use of taxes reinvestment of savings in local situations and outflow of information. The same analysis can also be done at macro-level. Actions taken as a result of such analysis should help towards maintenance of a self-sustaining resource base.

As we stand on the threshhold of the 1990s, it is important that all agencies engaged with Africa measure their relevance to Africa's transformation and progress by the extent to which they contribute to the drain of wealth from Africa and the extent to which Africans are the subjects of the activities of the agencies. African Governments are particularly challenged to reflect on practices of government and measure these practices against the criteria of the promotion of justice and critical consciousness, the extent to which they have worked to block the unabated flow of wealth from Africa, how the structures and values of government contribute to the poverty of Africa. This will not be an easy undertaking for any African Government but they must find the strength to rise to the occasion in the interest of the survival of Africa. The crisis demands it.

Development agencies in partnership with governments, the present trustees for the poor and guardians of rationality will need to see themselves as trustees of the dignity, self-determination and liberation of the people, guardians of justice to end exploitation. Development assistance must analyze their modes of operation and determine to what extent they are part of the problem rather than the solution. They must also determine how they can help the people become subjects of their own destiny. It is now quite apparent that the Marshall Plan has not worked for Africa, a producer of primary commodities coming out of a colonial experience. Both development agencies and governments have a responsibility of sticking to the problem until it is solved. Governments live with the problem and therefore have little choice. Development agencies on the other hand are already making loud sounds of aid fatigue and their return to Eastern Europe.

Africa's recovery and transformation must take place in the 1990s. The margin of error at our disposal now is that between "kwashiokor" and "marasmus". The process, therefore, must begin now - every day gone is a day too late to practise new values, to take action together with others to build an African future and make our contribution to improving the quality of relationships in our global village.

Notes

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